

**Town of North Smithfield Planning Board
Kendall Dean School, 83 Greene Street
Thursday, March 18, 2010, 7:00 PM**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

1. Roll Call

Present: Chair Scott Gibbs, Stephen Vowels (left at 8:45 pm), Gene Simone, Dean Naylor, Alex Biliouris, Joe Cardello (left at 8:45 pm), and Art Bassett. Also present were Town Planner Bob Ericson and Town Solicitor Rick Nadeau.

Mr. Naylor made a motion to switch agenda items 2 & 3, so the Board can hear the Marshfield Commons application before considering the minutes of March 4, 2010. Mr. Simone seconded the motion, with all in favor.

2. Marshfield Commons: Major Land Development Project Master Plan Informational Meeting

Owner/Applicant: Woonsocket Neighborhood Development Corporation

**Location: Mechanic Street, Assessor's Plat1, Lots 69, 423,
Zoning: RS-40 (Suburban Residential)**

(Previously subject to a master plan informational meeting--Jan. 7, Feb 4, Feb 18, March 4, 2010)

Attorney William Landry, representing the applicant, addressed the Board to report that since the last meeting, the applicant and the Planning Department have been in contact to work on the final design issues. They are seeking Master Plan approval at this meeting. The issue that was outstanding was the width of the internal roadways. There are a few options and the applicant is seeking the Board's direction on which option would be most favorable. They also discussed the number of parking spaces. Seventy-six are required; there are currently eighty-seven planned, down from ninety-seven in the previous plan. They are prepared to be guided by the Board on this issue as well. Mr. Landry stated that the vision of the development is that of a neighborhood, not an apartment complex. They would like winding roads, with some parallel parking.

John O'Hearne gave a brief summary of the most recent plan. Thirty-eight units are proposed on 6 acres. He showed the Board pictures of a 13-unit development off North Main Street in Slatersville to illustrate the size of the proposed development. He also made reference to Ridge Road in order to illustrate road width in areas familiar to the Board. He stated that narrow roads (14') were proposed in order to avoid some of the stigma associated with low and moderate income housing developments, which typically have lots of asphalt. He outlined different road widths, which all meet fire truck access requirements. Mr. O'Hearne also stated that narrower roads help to calm traffic.

The Chair brought up the time clock on the decision time and stated that, because there have been some delays with this application, the Board is concerned with the April 23, 2010 deadline. He asked if the applicant would be amenable to extending the clock by 30 days, if it is necessary. Mr. Landry stated that there is some pressure on the applicant concerning financing of the project, but they would work with the Board and provide time if it ends up being necessary. He would like the Board to give direction on the traffic and parking issues in order to give the applicant a chance to get the plans ready for approval before the deadline.

Mr. Cardello stated that he grew up on Ridge Road and police cruisers could not get down the road when people were parked. He stated that if room is available for parking, people will park on the road, no matter how narrow it is. He asked if the sloping sidewalks which are proposed as one of the emergency vehicle access options are ADA-compliant. Mr. O'Hearne stated that all sidewalks proposed meet ADA requirements. Mr. Cardello also asked about the parking for specific units and pointed out that if there is no designated parking spot very close to each unit, people will park on the street, because they will not want to walk to get to their homes. He added that he would rather see seventy-six dedicated parking spots rather than have more spread out throughout the development. He asked that the plans show a typical section of the roadways. He also stated that he is not in favor of stone driveways because of maintenance

issues. Engineer Scott Moorehead stated that they could use reinforced grass pavers. Mr. Cardello stated that he would be in favor of that.

Mr. Cardello also expressed his concern about Florence Street. In the case that the water line is installed, he would like to be sure that the entire road be repaved, not patched. He is not in favor of the bumpout parallel parking spaces. Mr. Moorehead said that the road width could vary, with sections of 20' widening to 28', then going back to 20'. This would provide some areas of on-street parking. Mr. Cardello stated that if that option is used, then it should be carried through the entire development. He stated that if pedestrian traffic is being encouraged, the sidewalks should be at least 5' wide. He also stated that if the stonewall on the property is to be saved, specific provisions for this need to be included on the plan.

The Board discussed trash pickup. At this time, there is one dumpster area shown on the plan. Terri Barbosa of Blackstone Valley Neighborworks stated that they are in the process of contacting trash removal companies to try to arrange for individual trash pick-up. If this cannot be arranged, more dumpsters will be added. The Board suggested at least three dumpsters.

Mr. Vowels asked if, during the application process for prospective tenants, proof of citizenship will be required. Ms. Barbosa said yes. The Board also discussed whether there could be a process by which

North Smithfield residents or Rhode Island residents will have precedence over out-of-state residents. Mr. Landry stated that he will contact Rhode Island Housing for an answer. He believes that it can't be limited to town residents, but he has never seen a requirement that out-of-state applicants have to be accepted.

Mr. Cardello asked about school buses and whether they would be entering the development or picking up children on Mechanic Street. Ms. Barbosa said she thinks they would be picked up at the existing Mechanic Street stop.

Mr. Biliouris asked if residents would be doing their own landscaping. Ms. Barbosa stated that all landscaping would be contracted out.

Mr. Biliouris asked about the existing traffic problem at Mechanic Street and Central Street and whether the Board can ask the applicant to address it. Mr. Nadeau stated that the public safety of North Smithfield residents is part of the approval process, even within the Comprehensive Permit process. Mr. Biliouris asked the applicant if they would look at it and try to make it safer. Mr. Moorehead said that the problem is due to poor geometry, with a t-intersection less than 100' from another t-intersection. Mr. Moorehead said he will look at it, but he does not know if there is an affordable solution within the development's budget. Mr. Nadeau said that the applicant does not have any responsibility to fix a problem outside of the property, but the Board can look to see if the impacts of the project exacerbate the

existing conditions. Mr. Cardello asked if the Board can require improvements if they find the project exacerbates the existing problem. Mr. Nadeau said they can ask for some things, such as signals, but they cannot require the applicant to redesign the road. Mr. Landry stated that under state statute, the applicant does not have to solve a long-standing problem with existing infrastructure, but that they could add signage or assist with engineering.

Mr. Naylor stated that he agreed with many of the issues brought up by the other Board members, and that he is concerned with the density issues for this project. He stated that the proposed development would be triple the density limits. He asked the applicant if they would be presenting any information on fiscal impact. Ms. Barbosa stated that they have submitted the fiscal impact study. Mr. Naylor said that he is aware that the Board cannot base their vote on fiscal impacts, but he has some questions on the findings of the submitted study. He does not agree that the town would benefit from the development. He said that there may be an initial benefit, but that this will fall off dramatically after the first year. Ms. Barbosa stated that the projections show a continuous return to the town. Mr. Ericson commented that the 20-year addendum mixed in secondary benefits, and the Planning Board did not have to accept that premise.

The Board discussed different parking configurations around Unit 9. Mr. Cardello suggested reducing the project by one unit to make

room for parking adjacent to each unit.

The Chair stated that because of design issues that need to be incorporated and new plans that will need to be submitted, he is not supporting a vote on the application at this meeting. The meeting was opened to the public at 8:25 pm. The Chair stated that the public hearing would not be closed tonight, so if any members of the public want to wait until a future meeting to speak, they will still have that opportunity.

Jake Allard of 28 Mechanic Street addressed the Board to express his concern over the size of the project. He stated that he feels that it is too large of a development that is being imposed on a quiet neighborhood. He said that safety will be impacted on Mechanic Street and Highview Avenue. He is concerned with the number of children that may have to walk a long way to the school bus stop. He said that the large number of people and cars will result in congestion and pollution. He asked the Board not to approve the project at this time.

Tom Dybala of 85 Highview Avenue asked about the drainage and where the stormwater runoff from the site would go. The Chair stated that preliminary plans have been submitted. Mr. Dybala stated that he does not want more runoff added to his street. Mr. Ericson said that DPW has submitted a comment, which requests that the existing catch basins and piping should be evaluated. A new stormwater

management system should include the functions of the existing system, instead of giving the town an easement to maintain the existing system. Mr. Ericson said that the Board could put in a condition that existing drainage is subject to further review. Mr. Cardello stated that if a failing drainage system runs through the property, the applicant should bear the burden to solve the problem. Mr. Dybala asked if he should address questions to the Planning Department. Mr. Ericson said yes and added that he may also contact the DPW. The Chair said that the issue has been raised and the Board is sympathetic to it.

Mr. Ericson said that Maryanne Belheumer has submitted pictures showing the area during high rainfall (taken in January). The pictures were submitted to the Board for review. Mr. Cardello asked if there is an area subject to storm flow (ASSF) or stream. Mr. Ericson said it is an ASSF. Mr. Cardello asked that it be shown on the next set of plans, in relation to the buildings. Mr. Moorehead asked to see the pictures, and then pointed out the area on the plans. Mr. Moorehead said that the drainage would be slowed down through Highview Avenue and offsite; there is no intention for any additional water to go to that area. Mr. Cardello asked that the water flow be shown on the plans and whether it can be addressed by the project. Mr. Moorehead stated that the intention is to upgrade and will even try to reduce runoff.

Mr. Naylor made a motion to continue the hearing until April 1, 2010.

Mr. Vowels seconded the motion, with all in favor.

Mr. Naylor made a motion to take a 5-minute recess at 8:45 pm. Mr. Vowels seconded the motion, with all in favor.

Mr. Vowels and Mr. Cardello left the meeting at 8:45 pm. Mr. Bassett voted in place of Mr. Vowels on the remaining agenda items.

The Chair called the meeting back to order at 8:53 pm.

3. Approval of Minutes: March 4, 2010

Mr. Biliouris made a motion to approve the minutes of March 4, 2010. Mr. Simone seconded the motion, with all in favor.

4. Capital Budget Review: Schools, DPW, EMA, Police, Fire & Rescue

Mr. Ericson gave a brief overview of the capital budget requests for the Schools, DPW, EMA, Police, and Fire & Rescue.

School Department: The five-year plan of last year has been moved forward one year. The one urgent project identified is the drinking water at North Smithfield Elementary School.

Public Works: Mr. Ericson suggested the department be provided with a \$20,000 opportunity fund in order to encourage creativity in

obtaining needed equipment at greatly reduced rates, as the DPW has done very successfully in the past.

EMA: A trailer has been requested, with pictures submitted.

Police: There is an issue with regard to cruisers. In North Smithfield, capital expenses are defined as at least \$3,000 in cost with a 10-year useful life. Cruisers are being replaced on a 4-8 year cycle. Mr. Ericson stated that cruisers should be in the operational budget, not the capital budget. There are other capital requests, including computers, rifles, and tasers.

Fire & Rescue: Mr. Ericson stated that the Fire & Rescue department is a non-profit under contract to the Town. They have requested \$45,000 for a new roof, but Mr. Ericson said it is not a town-owned building.

The Chair restated his position that the Planning Board should not be involved in this process and suggested sending the requests to the Town Council with no further comment.

The Chair made a motion to forward the capital budget requests for the School Department, DPW, EMA, Police, and Fire & Rescue to the Town Council with no further comment. Mr. Naylor seconded the motion, with all in favor.

5. Ordinance Review: Redevelopment Ordinance revisions

The Board members had been given copies of the Redevelopment Ordinance with the proposed amendments highlighted to review before the meeting. The Board discussed what the Planning Board's role would be in the redevelopment process. Mr. Nadeau stated that under state law, the Planning Board has the right to review and make recommendations to the Town Council, but there is only one body to handle permitting within redevelopment districts. At this time there are no approved redevelopment districts in town.

The Chair stated that in Burrillville the Planning Board is able to make decisions for redevelopment districts. Mr. Nadeau stated that Burrillville does not comply with state law and he will be watching to see if it is upheld in court.

The proposed amendments are minor. The Town Council wanted to make sure that the Planning and Zoning Boards are involved in redevelopment decisions. The ordinance clarifies that these boards will have input, in the form of review and recommendations, in the redevelopment process.

The Board discussed their desire to have a role of authority in this process, but Mr. Nadeau stated that it is not allowed under the state law. Mr. Biliouris stated that he would like it if the entire ordinance could be rewritten in the future.

The Chair asked if there could be an ad hoc member of the Planning Board on the Redevelopment Agency. Mr. Nadeau stated that currently each Town Council member can appoint one member to the Redevelopment Agency, but there is no provision for ad hoc members.

Mr. Biliouris made a motion to recommend that the Town Council approve the suggested amendments to the existing Redevelopment Ordinance as outlined and as may be further amended by the Town Solicitor, unless further amendments are substantive. Mr. Bassett seconded the motion, with all in favor.

6. Planning Update: Review of current events

Mr. Ericson updated the Board on Branch Village. A proposed purchase and sale of the ATP site will add to the perceived value of Branch Village.

Upcoming applications to be heard at the April 1, 2010 meeting include the pre-application for Stop & Shop on Eddie Dowling Highway and Anchor Subaru, who recently purchased Smithfield Nissan. A review of CDBG applications will also be held.

Mr. Naylor made a motion to adjourn at 9:32 pm. Mr. Simone seconded the motion, with all in favor.